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628 trickery, and that he was attempting to get him to bend his face down so that his sons could spear him, so he said he was not thirsty and that he had decided to leave. Baerwit said, "Before you go I want to make my people one in a makarata. They are three groups now." Birindjaoi said, "Yes, you do that so that we won't have a lot of spear troubles." The Djinba and Ritarngo peoples who were under Baerwit's leadership stood up and looked meaningly at each other; but the other group, the Gunalbingi, stood up and looked at the ground, which indicated they were not at one with the others in their plot to kill Birindjaoi. While they stood [787] there a white light seemed to play all over his body like the reflection of the sun's light in a pool. Raiola noticed that Birindjaoi's body seemed to change. The light came and went several times. The first time that it came it was a spirit to warn him and Raiola that trouble was there for them. The former did not see it, but Raiola did. Raiola saw it like the flash of lightning in a dark night, and it made him shut his eyes.

Birindjaoi said again to Baerwit, "Go ahead and make these people one."

Baerwit said, "My legs are tired. You go ahead and we will come behind you."

Birindjaoi said, "No, we will walk together."

Raiola and he walked together. Raiola talked to him in a distant language which the others could not understand. He said, "They don't understand me in this language. I saw three lights shine on you. I know now those men want to hurt you." The group of men meanwhile had been walking toward a wooded plain. When they were very near it Baerwit started walking rapidly toward the two. He cried out to his chief fighter, "Tjari, you run and catch Raiola. We cannot hurt him; he belongs to our own people, but he will fight if we try to spear Birindjaoi." The group of clansmen formed around them. An old man, who was a near relative to Birindjaoi, quietly stood up beside him and put his abdomen against his back so that no one could spear him when he was not looking. Raiola, before this had happened, had given him a spear, and Blumberi, also a relative by marriage to Birindjaoi, had presented him with a spear-thrower. Raiola then turned to Baerwit. He said, "You think you are going to kill him? You kill him and I will kill one of your men. No, I [202] won't kill one; I shall kill two. Birindjaoi is a messenger man and you have no right to kill him. You are doing wrong. All right; I will do wrong and kill people who are near to me."

Tjari ran at Birindjaoi with his spear pointed at him. Raiola turned upon him with his spear, as did Birindjaoi. Tjari moved back into his group. One of the Djinba warriors threw a spear at Birindjaoi when he was not looking. The old man called out in time for him to grab the spear before it hit him. Raiola threw a spear at his attacker and caught the latter in the thigh. The man fell on his knee and from this position

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852 [The activities of the foregoing sections, largely preparatory, have involved only the home camp. The arrival of the visiting clans marks the beginning of the most significant phases of the Gunabibi.]

852 1. The men then leave and go back to their ceremonial camp. The
202 two Yiritja snakes are given a human hair string decorated with
211 parrot feathers and tipped with white cockatoo feathers. It is a ceremonial "message stick" and represents the snake. The men leave with the message and go to the other clans, inviting them to the ceremony.

[535] 2. Meanwhile the song and dance cycle of Section C 3 is gone through, starting with the unmated male sea gull and ending with the four Muits. At the same time a large round hole is dug in the men's ceremonial grounds by the members of the Yiritja moiety. All the animals, birds and plants which dance get in the well with the two Yiritja snakes. In theory the two snakes leave with a message stick; but in practice this seldom happens, unless they go to nearby clans. They wait until the end of the ceremony, centered around the taboo hole, before departing; or if they do leave, two other men enact the rôles of the Yiritja snakes. The leader sings over them, and they all dance in the well as one people.

852 A month has supposedly gone by since the departure of the messengers, and the moon is once more new. Once again the men put bushes under their arms, carry lighted torches, leave their own ceremonial ground, and dance out near the women's ground, where
[431] they surround the group of women. The old women repeat their previous performance. Gifts are again made by the women.

All the men, including the two Yiritja snakes carrying the presents made by the women, return to the men's camp again. A forked stick railing is placed around the taboo well and the gifts are hung on it. The Dua leaders of the Gunabibi ceremony keep the gifts after this offering has been made to Muit.

852 3. The two Yiritja snakes and the initiated son or younger brother
202 of the leader of the Gunabibi (in other words, two Yiritja moiety men and one Dua moiety man) are given a mandelprindi and told to go to all the clans and tell them they are ready for the final phases of the ceremony. The Yiritja snakes are sometimes spoken of as the waku of Yurlunggur, and the son of the leader is "all the same as the snake. He can't sing out, but the Yiritja snakes do it for him." The Yiritja men whirl the bull roarer outside the camps of the various clans as a signal that the final dance will start and also as an invitation and virtual command for all who hear to appear.

At the various camps messengers supposedly go through some of

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the performances that have been held at the original camp. The sounds they make are the voice of the snake. The women's reply from the other camps is that of the two old Wawilak women. The hole dug is a representation of a Mirrirmina well and is sung over to be made such by the power names of that well. The sequence of dances is the same sea-gull-to-Muit cycle; the unmated men dance first and then the females. The dancers who symbolize the unmated males and females do not go in the well. Only mated groups of males and females enter.

Native Interpretation.—The reason for keeping the unmated male and female dancers out of the well, according to the leader of several of the ceremonies, is the same as that given for separating the males and female in the cycle of songs in Section C. "That snake is all the same as a man.—[Here he was speaking of the rock python and other snakes who are the living counterparts of the totemic spirits.] He walks about single [a male dances up to the entrance to the hole]. A woman snake walks about single and lays eggs. By and by at stringy-bark flower time in the dry season they find each other. Mobs of these snakes find each other and they copulate and lay eggs for children [all the dancers go inside the hole]. When the wet season comes one man goes one way and another man goes another way looking for rat and lizard food. By and by those eggs break and the children of the snake come out. They walk about single, the female goes one way, and the male another. The dry season comes and a mob comes out and they copulate and make eggs again and go along a hole because this is a house for them." When the snakes congregate "all kinds mixed up, they all go into the one hole for copulating. In the [early] morning up in the big rocks before daylight they come out a little way and copulate. Two more come out, man and woman, man and woman, and copulate and then go into the hole."

F. The Kartdjur Is Made and the Gunabibi Well Abandoned

1. A crescent-shaped trench, the kartdjur, is dug, and the well abandoned.
2. The snakes dance in the kartdjur; the copulation of the libidinous man and woman and of the two rock pythons.

1. After the messengers leave, the round taboo hole is abandoned and a larger crescent-shaped trench is dug. The trench (kart-djur) is four or five feet deep; the earth is piled along its concave sides. It is about ten feet long, and the width is sufficient for two men to pass

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884 534 A small pandanus palm stump is trimmed to a convenient size for a beating stick. As soon as the totemic drum is made, it is carried under a man's arm and struck with the pandanus palm stick. The women reply from the main camp with "Kait-ba! kait-ba!" This is symbolic of the beginning of an Ulmark, as the sounding of the bull roarer is of the Gunabibi.

884 713 *Native Interpretation.*—The sound of the drums is the voice of Muit, and "the women answer the same way as for Mandelprindi [in the Gunabibi] only they say 'Kait-ba! kait-ba!' [instead of making high trilling sounds]."—"The women calling out 'Kait-ba! kait-ba!' is what they said in trying to dance and keep Muit back."

C. The Kangaroo Messengers

884 1. They visit other groups to invite them. They have two kangaroo tail emblems with them.

2. The triangular dance ground is made; the behavior of the visitors who arrive.

884 202 1. For several weeks the men continue dancing the "buck and wing" jig step while the women gather palm nuts and put them in water to soak out the poison. Meanwhile a few of the men make two small emblems. One is supposed to be the tail of the large gray kangaroo, the other the tail of the stone kangaroo.

The kangaroos are then sent away to the surrounding clans to invite them to the ceremony. When they approach a camp they cut a large club-like stick and beat it against a hollow tree. The camp people hear it and realize that Ulmark messengers have arrived to invite them to its ritual. A man from the camp goes out to meet the messengers, who say, "We have two kangaroo tails here, one Dua, one Yiritja. We have all the food ready. You must come."

884 [302] [33] 884 533 2. While the messengers are away the men in the camp make a triangular dance ground which is the same in structure, material, and form as the Djungguan dance ground. When the visitors—men, women and children—approach the camp of the clan that is giving the ceremony they paint themselves with red ocher. They sing the Kait-ba, kait-ba refrain until they arrive in the main camp. Visitors who arrive early and who have been initiated into the Ulmark are conducted by the old local men to the men's dance ground, where they start dancing the characteristic jig step of the Ulmark.

All neophytes are supposed to remain on the ceremonial grounds

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and not go to the main camp until the Ulmark ceremony is over. They do not dance. The women stay in the women's camp. The women form themselves into groups according to their clan, and dance and sing, "Kait-ba! kait-ba!"

The men, also grouped according to clan, sing:

(1) The honeybee (Yer-pain) of the Dua moiety
(2) Small stone kangaroo (pardi-pardi)
(3) A grub found in rotten wood floating on lakes and rivers (Ka-mer-ung)
(4) A grub found in the trunk of the pandanus tree
(5) An acacia tree grub (Bar-ler-wir-lar)
(6) A grub found in the roots of the lake grass (I-nur-i)
(7) A grub found in the lily bulbs

At the end of each song cycle a call is made that is the same as the chorus refrain of the Djungguan ceremony.

Naïve Interpretation.—"When they [the messengers] hit the tree it is like when those two women were walking and saw honeybees' nest and cut down the tree,"—i.e., the tree that is beaten by the messengers is hollow, as was the tree which the old women cut down. The hollow tree is also beaten as a substitute for the hollow log drum.

The triangular dance ground is "all the same as the Djungguan." It is called barn-ga-ga and means python's body. "The women dancing are the two Wawilak sisters." The songs that the men sing when they are divided into groups are "every kind of animal that the two women saw on their way down to Mirrirmina." These songs are to stop Muit and were sung by the two Wawilak women.

D. The Torres Straits Pigeon and Uvar

1. The pigeon emblem is placed twice within the drum on the triangular dance ground.

1. After the completion of the dance ground, the leader announces that the Torres Straits pigeon dance will be performed. The man who dances this dance has red ocher on his face, a white head band, dots on his body, and a red ocher surfacing from the knees to the elbows. A man brings the ceremonial drum, Uvar, and lays it down at the large end of the triangular dance ground. A small light stick is painted, and feathers are tied to one end to represent the pigeon.

The dancer lies down on the ground beside the "pigeon," crying out, "Wah! Wah!!" He picks up the pigeon, arises, and dances a short

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for sexual intercourse." This explicitly states the relationship of their feeling toward modern man's activities and toward the activities of the old Wongar men.

D. Sea Tides and Flood Waters Are Danced

1. The tides of the ocean and the floods are danced; certain birds and animals are included.

1. The following dry season word comes in from the various clan groups that they have red parrot string ready. The leader then sends out word that a Narra ceremony can be held. The messengers are decorated with red parrot feather armlets and may carry a miniature Dua totemic emblem carefully wrapped in paper bark. The ceremony can take place in either a Yiritja or a Dua camp ground, even though the performance is Dua. This statement is true with the possible exception of the Gwiyula clan; they seem to have a strong feeling that their ceremony ought to be held at their own well. Yiritja men can dance with Dua men.

The men and women of the various clans arrive and bring the parrot feathers or parrot feather string they have accumulated during the year. Ideally, many rangas should be made, including, in addition to the others named earlier in this chapter, fire, basket, labia minora, and the other totemic emblems that belong to the clans of the Dua moiety. The rangas that were made the year before are taken out of the mud, washed, painted with red ocher, and the parrot string put on them. The men paint their bodies and faces with red ocher. White clay is put on their bangles. It takes several days to prepare the totemic emblems properly. While the men are engaged in these preparations, the women have been industriously collecting lily bulbs, palm nuts and yams to supply the men with food for the period of the ceremony. Some of the men carry food from the various camps to the Narra ground. This dance ground is the same as the small quadrangle used in the Duni, except that the borders are made with heaped-up earth.

The first dance is spring flood water. The line of men dance back and forth, following the leader or calling out, "Ai—e!! Ai—e!!" which is the water coming down; when they turn and retrace their steps they call out, "Um—um ye," which is the tide returning. They next dance the ocean. The leader calls out, "Let! Let!" and when the dancers turn, "R-R-R-irt!! R-R-R-irt!!" the cries of the red parrot from the tree tops.

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"That fish tried to stop the water with this grass, but the water came too fast and went on. The fish was a bream [mart-bu-na] and is Yiritja." 796 773

"For Yiritja that white clay on the woman and on the men too is all the same as foam. Garrawark had that foam when he dived to make Narra wells. In the Yiritja ring when the dancers come it's all the same as a fresh-water 'tide' and pushes that bream along the ocean. This tide is fresh water from a heavy rain, that takes the bream down to the ocean."

When the people divide up into groups and everyone goes into the water according to his or her clan well, they are ducks, and "They *are diving down in their ranga well water.*' Those ducks are all the same as a mate for that well. It means too they are all the same as Garrawark, because that Yiritja ranga been do that. He went down in that water and came out all the same as those people do." The washing, then, is no ordinary washing but is symbolical of being cleansed by the spiritual well water, and the act is the same as the totem's. There is a general story about the "tide" (flood) carrying the rangas down to the sea and of the sea tides pushing the flood waters back.

When the leader and his men paint the rangas and sing water it means that the water is being put on the red ocher and refers also to the original flood. When mud is sung it means: "You are not painting that ranga with mud but with red ocher, but it is like you paint him with mud and that mud is all the same as mud from the ranga well and where we put the ranga when we get through with it.

"We sing water running fast and rain coming. We start from rain. We do this because of that flood water. The water comes from the rain and runs down the creeks. We sing bandicoot first because he comes with the rain time. Bandicoot comes out and makes holes looking for food. We must sing bandicoot after water."

(The water dance in all these Narra ceremonies is supposed to be the primeval floods and tides. It has been amply interpreted before under the Dua heading.)

D. The Sea Tides and Flood Waters Are Danced

1. At the beginning of the new season new dances of the floods and tides are started. 796 282

1. When the dry season arrives again, the leader sends his son or

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younger brother as a messenger to all the surrounding clans to announce the beginning of the true Narra ceremony. This messenger should be decorated with bangles which have streamers of opossum fur on them, but he is not always. One or two miniature garrawark totems covered with bark are made to serve as message sticks. The leader says, "You take this small ranga to all the people [Dua and Yiritja] and tell them we are going to start now. If people make trouble for you, show them this ranga, and they won't fight you or hurt you, because you are a messenger man."

The visitors begin to arrive before the messenger returns. Some distance from the camp, they call out rain cloud; when they are near, rain; then finally, flood water. They approach the camp in groups, singing "Ka-wa!" to announce their coming ceremonially. They call out the sound of well water running in the creek as they go to the leader in the main camp. They make a ring around the tree from which the leader of the Narra calls the power names (see page 357). The leader of each group of visitors climbs it and calls out the names of the visitors' clans.

After a chorus has joined with two men in a crocodile dance, the men leave the main ground and go into the men's dance ground. They take a vegetable food with them. Each crowd of visitors goes through the same ceremony on its arrival.

After the first few visitors have appeared, the men start putting feathered string on their totemic emblems. The leader walks around among the groups and instructs them how to make the various emblems. Some people make Banitja, some Barrimundi. The Warumeri people, if they are there, will make dugong rib, garrawark, crayfish, dorsal fin of the whale, tail of the whale, as well as the other rangas named above. The Wangurri would do likewise. The Ritarngo do not have the garrawark, but in its place they make the black duck ranga.

The Narra dance ground is now constructed (or may have been constructed earlier) with heaped up earth to define its limits. The leader starts the bandicoot and water dance. If the dancers have rangas from the sea-way cycle of songs, they dance back and forth: they drag their spear-throwers on the ground, utter no sound, and run up and down the dance ground until they are almost exhausted. (This is the tide coming in and going out for a great distance.) The leader sings out: "Sis!! Sis!! Sis!!" This is the wind coming up. He

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fiber string to keep the impact with the target from spreading the prongs and splitting the shaft. This spear is used only for fishing. When the natives are able to procure them, they sharpen small iron rods and substitute them for the wooden prongs.

C. *Sting-ray Spears.*—The barbed prongs found on the tail of the sting-ray are kept by the native hunter. After he has gathered anywhere from twelve to thirty, he attaches them to the end of a seven-foot shaft. The hafting is done with resin and a wrapping of fiber string. Beeswax is never used. The prongs are so arranged that they present a semicircular set of points to the enemy when thrown. This spear is used only for fighting.

All fighting and hunting spears are used without alteration in the various ceremonies. A challenge spear, however, is especially made for one particular purpose and functions in no other way. The native takes the usual small-size cane-shaft spear (Variety 2b), paints it with alternating bands of light and dark paint, and wraps it with feathered fiber string. Two tassels are hung on the handle end. Two of these spears are sent the enemy as a challenge to an open fight.[3]

A toy spear is used by the small boys and thrown without the use of a spear-thrower. It has, therefore, no hole for articulation at its handle end. Instead of a point, it has a wad of paper bark tied with fiber string at its distal end to prevent injury to an opponent. Sometimes feathers are added as ornaments. This spear is sometimes only a straight stick without the paper-bark covering.

Clubs

The Murngin do not possess the smaller clubs found farther south in Australia, nor do they have any type of throwing club. All clubs found here in the north are of the large type, are used for striking a blow, and do not leave the hand when in use.

The two main types of clubs are: (1) the flat-bladed type, and (2) the bird-headed or jabiru-headed type. The first has two subtypes. The jabiru form has been given this name because it both looks like and is painted to represent a jabiru's head. Its shaft, a cylinder two inches in diameter, is about four and one-half feet long. It weighs about four pounds. The head of the club is about one inch long and joins the shaft at almost right angles. The trunk and root of the mangrove tree are used as raw material. The root is used for the head, and the trunk becomes the shaft. The shaft is painted red and white. A small hole is cut in the head and the edge painted to represent a bird's eye. The "beak" of the bird club head is sharpened and used as a hook or pick. The fighter gets the head of the club behind his antagonist, pulls it quickly forward, and hits him on the back of the neck;

[3] See the chapter on Murngin Warfare for a further description of the way this spear is used.

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765 The bones are circulated from the mother or wife to the other near female relatives of the dead man. Finally, after several months or possibly a year, the bones are given back to the brother or father of the deceased. They then may be put on the platform or placed in a hollow log coffin. If they are put on a platform several months elapse before they are taken down and finally placed in a hollow log.

When the bones are to be placed in the hollow log the women are ordered to gather a great quantity of bush food, preferably cycad nuts. The leader sends men out into the bush to select a tree hollowed out by termites. The bones are collected from the women and placed in a bush house at the edge of the camp beside the hollow log coffin. A marai yirri is then made which is used as a message stick and sent to the other encampments of related clans to invite them to come to the final ceremony. [302]

The men clean the bark off the log and carve it while the women prepare the dancing ground. This ground is of no particular shape. The coffin is painted with red ocher and the bones are once more given a coating of the same material. The symbol of the totem well is also painted on the bones. The leader then asks the women for the large palm-nut cake which they have prepared and takes it to the bush house. The women are not allowed to come. The garma cycle of songs, beginning with stringy-bark flower and ending with the Mirrirmina well, is once more sung. When the men arrive at the white stone song the keeper of the bones picks them up. They then sing the lightning coming from the sky and hitting the tree. The bones are broken into small pieces and put into a paper-bark receptacle. The legs and arms are broken first, then the jaw bone. The skull is not broken to pieces at this time because the mother or some other near female relative is supposed to keep it. All the men paint themselves with a snake pattern. The bones are then taken in a basket to the main camp and given to the women, who cry over them. They are told to look at them for the last time. They hit their heads and once more cut themselves to show their sorrow. The bones are then returned to the men's dance ground, where snake's spittle (rain), the rock python, and the totem well are sung again. [533] [302]

The bones are then dropped in the hollow log. The log is stuffed at both ends with bark to keep the bones from falling out and placed in the fork of a tree. A hole is then dug and the hollow-log coffin placed upright in the ground. This completes the final ceremony over the bones of the dead man among the western clans of the Dua moiety.

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 O117 Muragin O117

ceremonial message sticks, they were all personal requests for food, tobacco and other goods used by the white man. I feel sure, however, that fuller research would reveal many more examples of the ceremonial type. 211

Whilst at Yirrkalla and Oenpelli I had to fly to Darwin several times on expedition matters. Each time I went one or more aborigines gave me message sticks to deliver to their friends at Darwin. My procedure (after I had made a record of the message stick either by a sketch or a rubbing) was to write the meanings of the various symbols on a sheet of paper, wrap the paper round the message stick and enclose it in an envelope, on the outside of which I wrote the name of the recipient as a guide to my memory. When I delivered the message stick, which I did on all but two occasions, I was able to explain to the recipient the significance of the marks on the message stick by referring to my notes. 211 202 177

(1) YIRRKALLA

While the expedition party was at Yirrkalla we received a visit from a white man who, according to the aborigines, had bought their seed pearls and tortoise-shell, but had not paid for them. A number of aborigines carved message sticks, which they delivered to the visitor by hand to remind him of his debt. At the same time, the aborigines added a request for a number of items of clothing and luxuries in the forlorn hope that some day he might send them along. Before the message sticks were delivered, I was able to make rubbings of two, one from *Bununga*, Fig. 66C, and another from *Mungurrui*, Fig. 67C, E. 211 202 439

(a) SECULAR MESSAGE STICKS

On Fig. 66C, which is *Bununga's* message stick, the upper three lines, *a*, represent three boxes of matches, *b*, two blankets, and *c*, singlets. Triangle *e* refers to the nineteen shillings debt owing to *Bununga* for some time; *d* is a request for shirts, *m* for two fishing lines, *n* for calico, and *o* for tobacco. 211 532*

Fig. 67E is *Mungurrui's* message stick to the same white man. The central dot, *a*, is the white man, the recipient of the message stick. The triangle *b* is a request for a towel, *c*, *c*, *c* for loin cloths, *d* a new belt, *e* a knife, *f* a mirror, *g* razor blades, *h* two fishing lines, *j* trousers, *k* shirt, *l* hair comb, and *m* hair oil.

On the reverse side, Fig. 67C, the upper cross-hatched carving is pure decoration. The line *n* is the sender, *Mungurrui*. The triangles, *o*, refer to the money owing to him for seed pearls and tortoise-shell; *p* is a request for a bag of flour, *q* for sugar, *r* for sticks of tobacco. *Mungurrui* referred to *s* as the 'asking' line.[48]

Figure 66E, F illustrates a message stick sent by *Wondjuk* at Yirrkalla to his partner, *Barumala*, in the ceremonial exchange cycle of Arnhem Land.[49]

48. This 'asking' symbol is also engraved on Fig. 67C, *s*, *t*, *q*, *u*, *v*, *z*.

49. Donald Thomson (1949) has given us a full description of the economic structure and ceremonial exchange system of Arnhem Land. The stone headed spears, *nambi*, asked for by *Wondjuk* travel only in a southerly direction, while the articles from Yirrkalla, i.e. stone axes, ceremonial bags and feather ornaments, move in the opposite direction. The types of articles and their direction of travel are indicated in Fig. 2 of Thomson's book. [439]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 OII7 Muragin OII7

Three of the message sticks from Yirrkalla were unidentified, Fig. 68C, D, Fig. 66A, B, and Fig. 67A, F. They are included to indicate additional designs employed on the message sticks of that locality.

(b) CEREMONIAL MESSAGE STICKS

The Man, Buma-buma, of Trial Bay

At Wialpa, Trial Bay,[50] during mythical times, an old *dua* man, *Boukabaluwuru*, instructed his son, *Buma-buma*, to go to an adjacent group of aborigines and bring back with him two boys who were due to be circumcised. When *Buma-buma* reached the distant camp he demanded, in the name of his father, two girls instead of two boys. Though the old men agreed to the demand, they were somewhat suspicious of the unusual request. On nearing Wialpa, *Buma-buma*, hiding the girls in the jungle, told his father that the old men of the distant people wanted at least another year before their youths were ready for circumcision. The father, who did not believe that story, demanded more and further more details, until *Buma-buma* was forced to admit he had brought girls instead of boys. The men, and especially the father, were so enraged over *Buma-buma's* disobedience and its consequent disgrace that they speared the young man to death. After the burial rituals of *Buma-buma*, the men at Wialpa were so ashamed of his actions that they changed themselves into water-birds, which still live in the nearby fresh-water swamps.

At the present time the ceremonial message stick, on which the figure of *Buma-buma* is engraved, is sent to a group of aborigines who have a boy ready for circumcision.[51] Although the designs on the stick refer specifically to the death and burial of *Buma-buma*, and not to circumcision, the myth of *Buma-buma's* disobedience and punishment is so well known that the significance of the message stick is understood.

Figure 65E is the obverse side and Fig. 65F the reverse. On Fig. 65E the dead body of *Buma-buma*, wrapped for burial, occupies the central position. The spears, which had been thrust into his side, are at *a*, *b*, *c*, *d*. The group of lines, *e*, are *dua* men and *f*, *jiritja* men, who are taking part in the burial rituals. The short lines, *g*, at the top of the message stick are the *jiritja* and *h*, at the bottom, the *dua* men, who are chanting the songs of burial. All these men have since been changed into water-birds. The designs on panel *j* refer to the paper-bark wrapping of the corpse.

The reverse side, Fig. 65F, shows *Buma-buma* when the decomposition is complete and the people have assembled to transfer his bones to the temporary bark coffin. The main lozenge-shaped design is the paper-bark wrapping round the corpse, which is now a skeleton. On the left at *a* is a *dua* man, *Biribirit*, with a bark coffin at his feet, and at *b* a *jiritja* man, also standing on a bark

50. Map, Fig. 57.

51. In north-eastern Arnhem Land the boys are circumcised when they are about eight years of age.

[Text continues on p. 473]

3: Mountford E-5 (1948) 1956 Oll7 Murngin Oll7

coffin. The short lines around the skeleton are the maggots deserting the body and burying themselves in the ground to pupate. The two men are now water-birds; the coffins, the paper-bark wrappings of the corpse and the body of *Buma-buma* are natural features at Wialpa.

The Night-bird, Karawak, and the Opossum, Marungo

During creation times the night-bird, *karawak*, flew from Milingimbi to a hollow tree at Cape Shield, Blue Mud Bay, so that he could talk to the opossum, *marungo*, who lived in it.[52]

At specified times, the aborigines associated with the night-bird and opossum totems carve a stick, similar to that illustrated on Fig. 65A, B, and send it to the clan and language groups on whose territory *karawak*, rested on his way to Cape Shield. The presentation of this stick is an invitation to attend the ceremonies at a specified time and place.[53]

Figure 65A,-B represents the hollow tree at Cape Shield on the top of which, every night, the night-bird and the opossum talk to each other. The day-time camp of the opossum is represented at *e*, *e*, and the night camp at *f*, *f*.

On Fig. 65A, the opossum on the left is ascending the tree at nightfall to keep his companion company, and on the right he is descending to sleep through the hours of daylight. The designs at *a*, *b*, *c* and *d* symbolize water-lilies which grow in the swamps near the totemic tree, and the short lines at the bottom of Fig. 65B, the scratches made by the opposum in the bark of the totemic tree as he climbs up and down.[54]

(2) Oenpelli

Figure 67B is a message stick an aboriginal, *Miljirina*, at Oenpelli asked me to deliver to his friend, *Jakinuramilja*, in Darwin.

The line *a* is *Miljirina*, the sender of the stick, and the line *b* the recipient, *Jakinuramilja*; *c* is *Tundara*, one of *Miljirina's* wives, and *d*, another wife, called *Marinja*. The lines *e* and *f* each represent a bottle of tobacco. *Miljirina* wanted his friend, *Jakinuramilja*, to induce his two wives, *Tundara* and *Marinja*, to come back to him at Oenpelli; he also wanted two bottles of tobacco.[55]

Figure 68E is the message stick I carried from an aboriginal, *Kainarani*, at Oenpelli to his son, *Pultadi*, in Darwin. The sender was distressed because his son had been drinking heavily, and was urging him to return to his father and

52. For the complete myth, see p. 502.

53. Warner (1937), p. 502, mentions that at Milingimbi similar *garrawak* message sticks are carried to both *dua* and *jiritja* groups notifying them that the *nara* rituals are about to start.

54. The symbolism employed on the bark pointing of the night-bird and the opossum, Pl. 115E, is similar to that used on the message stick.

55. Tobacco was traded in small bottles. When we were at Yirrkalla the mission authorities at southern Groote Eylandt discontinued the issue of tobacco. After that prohibition, there was a regular trade in bottles of tobacco between the expedition camp and the Groote Eylandt Mission. The tobacco followed the same lines as in the ceremonial trade cycle described by Thomson (1949).

7: Berndt E-5 (1946-1950) 1952
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sacred possessions were lost, a rôle which before this loss belonged to the men.

The sequence of the preceding ritual depends on the completion of the many *rangga*, the availability of men and neophytes, the abundance of red ochre and parakeet breast feathers, and the amount of food collected by the women. Although much of the latter is collected throughout the ceremonies, cycad 'bread' is stored, and its preparation commences weeks before the first rituals begin.

Just after the first ceremonies, people from other groups come to the main camp where the *nara* is being held. They have been summoned by specially designed message sticks, feathered string, or miniature copies of *rangga* objects moulded from wild honey wax. Ideally, at this point, all the *rangga* should be ready; but in practice, painting of the objects usually continues for some time, and visitors make and paint additional emblems. All these *rangga* relate to various features of the Djanggawul myth: the *rangga* brought by the Djanggawul; representations of the Djanggawul themselves, or their separate organs; natural phenomena; or totemic objects and species associated with the Djanggawul. Incidentally, the majority of the dances enact something of the behaviour of totemic species, and are carried out with the *rangga*.

When initially, at the onset of the ritual, the *rangga* are removed from the water or mud they are said to be like, firstly, *rangga* removed from the *ngainmara*, and secondly, children removed from the Sisters' wombs. Placing one's arm (or hand) into the water or mud to remove the *rangga* is like the Djanggawul Brother's inserting his hand into the vaginae of the Sisters to remove the children. The sacred clan patterns drawn with ochres on the objects are derived from water marks, which the Djanggawul's original *rangga* acquired during their journey in the bark canoe from Bralgu. Alternatively, these patterns symbolize 'womb marks' on a newborn child. Ochre is symbolic of blood, or the sun's rays, or the warmth of a fire: blood from afterbirth, rays of sun from the *daga* vagina disc of the sun, and fire (warmth) from the sun. The red breast feathers of the parakeet are symbolic of the sun's rays, of blood, or of an umbilical cord. The reiteration of dancing associated with the sea in every case signifies the great importance of the Djanggawul's landing at Jelangbara, which is one of the most sacred sites associated with these Beings. The singing of water from the sacred waterholes refers to these Beings inserting their *rangga*, and removing them so that water will gush forth; this is symbolic of coitus, and the rise of water is the flow of semen which fertilized both human beings and the earth. It represents, too, the

10: Warner E-5 (1926-1929) 1958
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623 clearly seen that those not represented at the conference were the real insti-
628 gators of the war and that their actions were without tribal sanction.

[202] One old man then suggested sending a messenger with a message stick to the bushmen, who were not represented, to tell them that there would be a great makarata or peace-making ceremony (pages 174-176). Someone replied that this was foolishness for makaratas had been tried and they had failed because the enemies violated the rules. Instead of bringing peace the makaratas had only brought more trouble and greater conflict. Discussion of this point finally brought victory to the one who opposed the makaratas because the antagonism of the coastal people against the inland clans was still very strong and they wanted vengeance as well as peace.

What, then, could be done to stop the fighting? The situation was desperate; drastic efforts must be made. One of the older men said, "Let us stop all war. This killing of our young men is no good. It is better that we have ceremonies all the time and never have war. Let us have a gaingar."

Everyone agreed he was right. The speaker continued, "We will have a spear fight to end all spear fights."

A gaingar is the most deadly form of Murngin warfare. Later I learned that 17 men had been killed in one gaingar. In proportion to the population this meant a higher mortality rate than in all of the battles of World War I. This old man was proposing that today's young men be sacrificed so that the young men of tomorrow could be saved.

I was asked what I thought of the idea. I did not respond for it was too much. I sat there, among a council of the wisest men of a Stone Age culture. In one sense several millenniums separated their civilization from mine. Yet I had been a soldier in a war in which our leaders and those of our allies had said, "This is a war to end all wars," and had sent millions of young men to die with this rallying cry.

The discussion continued. Most of the group were enthusiastically in favor of the gaingar. The minority, Mahkarolla among them, grudgingly agreed.

When the meeting disbanded Mahkarolla and I walked back to my camp. "When I was a boy I saw a spear fight to end all spear fights," he said. "Many men were killed. It was no good. We must not have it. My people did not stop fighting. As you see, we are fighting today just as we did before. Spear fights do not end spear fights."

159 One day Mahkarolla and I started on an expedition with two canoeloads
502 of Murngin men, I to map clan territories, he to visit the sacred pools where
E121 his totems lived. As we sailed in the dugout around the rocky cliffs of
784 Point Napier, across the channel from the English Company Islands, we
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15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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conclusion that in north-east Arnhem Land, the natives really did know the physiological facts, but were not interested in them; they were only interested in 'spiritual conception', which established a person's place in the social and religious structure of the tribe. But whatever be the degree of knowledge or ignorance regarding the physiological facts, there is no doubt that the accepted spiritual doctrine is one of pre-existence. The unborn spirits sojourn at the totemic well waiting to be incarnated, or reincarnated; to that centre they will return after death; and without the entry of the pre-existent spirit child into the womb, there could be no conception.

Everyday Matters

Mr Chaseling is not concerned with discussing complex social and religious problems. His aim is to help us know the Aboriginal as he is. To this end he provides much information regarding interesting everyday affairs. There is no smoke-signal code in this region, and message sticks are simply aids to memory. The Aborigines like having visitors and are anxious to keep them. Like the rest of us, they are subject to flattery, and they use a highly developed form of praise in asking for favours. The status of the women is low, but some affection is shown between spouses; moreover, women do exercise an important influence on affairs; for they live longer on the average than the men (they are not killed in 'wars'), and as a result accumulate a greater knowledge of the everyday myths and legends and of the clan's enemies and friends. There are about three females to each male, another consequence of 'warfare', and connected with this is the fact that usually a man has three wives; but there are a few cases of men with up to twelve wives.

These and many like facts are recorded in the pages which follow, pages which will do much to help readers appreciate the Aborigines of north-east Arnhem Land as human beings,

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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201 for a camp, a man raises his open palm and rests the side of his head on it, plainly suggesting a sleeping-place. Mosquitoes are suggested by stabbing a forefinger on parts of the anatomy, a shark is suggested by biting the forefinger, and to suggest a stingaree the same finger is swept down and forward from the mouth to imply the dangerous whipcord tail. A hand closed and held upright, with the extended forefinger waving inwards suggestively, refers to a man, and in the case of a boy, the same movement is followed by indicating his height. Rubbing the eyes with the fist signifies tears, and to say 'he is funny man' the signaller opens his mouth, nods his head and points to the humorist. Sucking the forefinger implies a fish; water is implied by tapping a bulge in the cheek. A stroke across the throat serves for a turtle, though the several varieties have further distinguishing signs.

Reference to the spearing of either men or game is by a casual flick of the right hand across the middle of the body. An ambush or stealthy night-raid is appropriately indicated by wiping the hand downwards over the face; death, or a corpse, by holding a hand in front of the face, with the fingers curved stiffly like claws. Hanging the fingers downwards from above the head serves for rain, and a clenched hand on the cheek means an egg.

Sentences are semaphored by a series of quick movements, and I have known men to sit silently by a camp fire and converse for hours in sign language when the only sound was an occasional burst of laughter after the recounting of some episode. When returning to Yirrkala with nomads in a canoe, they said there was trouble on the station and pointed to several men waving from the cliff-face. We were a mile from shore when one of the signallers took a piece of paper-bark and waved it so as to make his movements clearer. The crew read his message and told me that two local men had been ambushed and speared near Blue Mud Bay. Not

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only did he identify the killers by relationship signs, but said that only one body had been recovered and that the killers had escaped to their own country near Arnhem Bay.

Undoubtedly this sign-language has been used in silently planning and directing well-organized attacks that bewildered marauding traders and took police parties by surprise. Attempts have been made to prove that messages have been tapped out on musical clapsticks, but clapsticks are used only for a limited number of timings in songs. Full details and the signal for attack have been given unobtrusively in sign-language by merely flicking the hands.

Just as the spoken language is a living one, so the sign-language is being extended to include developments from contact with foreigners. Reference to police is made by placing the wrists side by side and holding them in front to suggest handcuffs. Macassar proas and sailing-boats are indicated by stretching an arm forward, clenching the hand, and raising the thumb for a mast; a boat captain by closing the hands, as on a wheel, and swaying from the hips as when heaving on a helm. A white man's sign is in bending the elbows, sweeping the hands to the breasts and then downwards and outwards; his gun in bending the head to the right, squinting along an imaginary barrel held in the left hand, and drawing the right trigger hand backwards. Wiping a crooked forefinger along the lips refers to tobacco; cattle or tinned meat are denoted by placing a closed hand on either temple and extending the forefingers to look like horns.

I took Burramurra to Darwin for medical attention, and after a few days' treatment I brought him from hospital. He attracted some attention by his awkward gait, and another nomad waved his hands and looked questioningly toward us, till Burramurra answered him with laughter and further hand movements. He told me he had just been asked if he had been drinking whisky and where had he got it?

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
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YULENGOR

211 [212] Nomads have not acquired the art of recording their thoughts, but they make use of the well-known 'letter-stick', and those I have received have been handed over with a certain breathlessness, as if they were charmed missives. Their use is intended to lend an importance to a message, which however cannot be deciphered by the recipient. All he sees on the flat oblong chip of wood is a series of carved lines, circles, and crosses, probably partly covered by a coat of red ochre. After an appropriate examination of the stick the bearer is invariably called on to decode the message. He obligingly takes it, and pointing to one mark says that it represents the writer, that another is for his brother, that several strokes refer to a number of days or lunar months, and that a wide cut is a request for a canoe or an indication of the strength of a raiding party. Marks on letter-sticks merely remind the bearer of points in the message he is conveying. The last line on all letter-sticks sent to me invariably ended with the request: 'Please send me some tobacco.'

[648] Before leaving Darwin on the first trip to east Arnhem Land, I visited three brothers who were serving sentences for having murdered Japanese fishermen in Caledon Bay. They were glum and disinterested till I told them where I was going, and they then asked me to take a letter-stick to their father. Weeks later I delivered this message on an isolated beach near Caledon Bay, and that night the camp sang and wailed over memories revived by the letter-stick.

• 207 372 Probably the most popular of all delusions concerning the nomad is that he sends messages by means of smoke. I am not aware that any aboriginal has ever sent any coded signal by smoke; yet, on the other hand, they will interpret smoke-fire as indicating the presence of visitors and will light fires for an easily understood purpose, or in accordance with a pre-arranged plan. Fires that break out unexpectedly and perhaps are due to smouldering logs bursting [775]

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into flame long after a bush-fire has passed, are in all seriousness attributed to mischievous spirits. All fires thus have some meaning, and though their significance may be wrongly interpreted, they do play an important part in elementary signalling. 207 377 [775]

A family brought the news to Yirrkala that a woman and her child were dangerously ill near Port Bradshaw, and as Mataman was going that way a few days later, he promised to let the local people know about the patients by smoke-fires. If they were dead he was to light a smoke-fire, and if they had recovered he was to do nothing. When great clouds of smoke billowed over the hills the following day, it was assumed that the woman was dead, and the usual wailing and mourning songs were sung. However, a few days later the woman and her child walked into Yirrkala and explained that Mataman had been hunting kangaroos and had lit a fire to smoke them out. [765]

Friendly visitors invariably light fires to give warning of their approach; otherwise they might be mistaken for enemies, and speared. In any case they do not know where their hosts are hunting, and they light fires to invite an answer from the camp they intend visiting. Smoke is also sent up as a warning signal when anything untoward happens, and a passing lugger is enough to start a line of fires. As each party of hunters sees the boat, they light fires to warn their friends. [574]

The rapidity with which detailed messages are passed from one camp to another has led to the assumption that information has been sent by secret smoke-signals. But the message-carriers are human. I have known men and women to travel long distances by night and, by taking short cuts, to be on the beach the following morning to meet the lugger after we had sailed some sixty miles overnight. [203]

A government officer was due to arrive at the station by air, and as the Yulengor had not previously seen an aeroplane

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372 they were excited and nervous. Some were scared and fled along the coast, but they had agreed to light smoke-fires when they saw the plane. Half an hour before the plane landed their smoke went up, and afterwards we heard that Yulengor fifty miles away, who had known nothing about the coming of the plane, had lit fires when they saw it, and the signals had been repeated nearer and nearer to us. I told the visitor that we had been warned of his approach by smoke-signals, and thinking of it, in the common manner, as being one of the mysterious and secret accomplishments freely attributed to aborigines, he asked: 'And what did they say about me?'